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INDIAN NOTES...

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BLACKFOOT PIPE BUNDLES

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AN interesting account of the Blackfoot Pipe bundles has been written by Dr. Clark Wissler.[1] Several specimens were procured and some additional information recorded by the present writer during a visit to the Blackfoot reservation in Montana, in the interest of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, in the summer of 1923.

Next of importance to the Blackfoot Medicine Pipe bundles, several of which are still in existence, is that known as the Catchers Society pipe. This bundle is essentially a war "medicine." Included among its contents is a hair-lock attachment representative of the potency of the bundle: this was the only part worn by the warrior when on the warpath.

The Catchers Society pipe is not to be confused with the Black Wrapped pipe, which is an entirely different "medicine," although in each case only two are said to have been made.

The originator of the Black Wrapped Pipe bundle was Northern Chief. At the present time

[1] *Anthr. Papers Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, vol. VII, pt. 2, pp. 136–168, New York, 1912.

778 [648] only one example exists among the Blackfeet, as the other was captured years ago by the Flatheads, and whether it has been preserved in that tribe is not known.

787 778 Northern Chief went out one day in the hope of having a vision, and was successful in his quest. In the dream a person appeared and told Northern Chief that he would give him a pipe, warning him, however, to be careful never to allow the pipe to touch the earth nor to permit any woman to touch it. The outer wrapper of the pipe bundle was of albino wolf-skin, while the inner one was black. Northern Chief learned the songs belonging to the bundle, and in his dream it was given to him to carry home. On his way he stopped to drink at a spring and thoughtlessly laid the pipe on the ground. His thirst quenched, he turned to pick up the pipe only to find that it had become a piece of rotten wood. He then awoke.

When Northern Chief returned home he made a pipe exactly like the one seen in the vision. He had been instructed that his pipe should belong only to brave warriors, preferably young and unmarried. The pipe always gave success in war and was used in the capture of the horses of the enemy. When on the warpath the bundle was unwrapped, and if a spider should chance to fall

726 778 [825] [787]

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out of it, this was regarded as an omen of success. If, on the warpath, anyone requested the

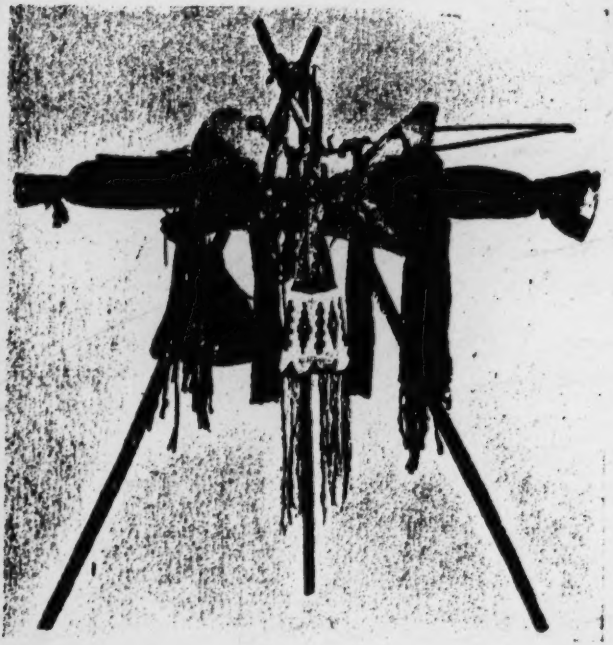

FIG. 103.—Catchers Society pipe bundle of the Blackfeet on its tripod. Length of bundle, 50 in.; of the tripod, 82 in. (12/512)

loan of the bundle, the owner painted the borrower and gave him some feathers belonging to the pipe.

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726 778 821 789 [533] When a war-party of Blackfeet was surrounded by enemies, and the owner of the pipe happened to be one of their number, his tribesmen always believed that they would be safe. If this happened in winter, the pipe-owner unwrapped the pipe, sang his medicine-songs, pointed the pipe backward and forward, and placed it under some earth.[1] A severe snowstorm followed almost immediately, it is said, thus giving the party an opportunity to escape.

Should a war-party have a similar experience in summer, the same ceremony was performed, except that in this case the stem of the pipe was wetted, when a cloudburst was bound to follow, again giving the party a chance to escape.

If a party bent on capturing horses approached an enemy camp on a very clear night, the pipe was unwrapped, whereupon the weather would change, thus giving the Blackfeet an opportunity to enter and leave the camp unseen.

778 821 The pipe is kept outside and taken round the lodge, always facing the sun. At sunset it is taken inside, but before doing so incense is made in the lodge.

787 778 When Little Dog was a young man, about 1835, and owned the Black Wrapped pipe, the

[1] The contact of the pipe with the earth, contrary to the injunction received in the dream, is not explained.

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same dream spirit that appeared to Northern Chief appeared also to him. This spirit told Little Dog that he would capture seven guns, and at some time would become head chief of his tribe. This actually occurred, Little Dog being one of the signers, in behalf of the Piegan, of the treaty between the Blackfeet and the United States on the upper Missouri, near the mouth of Judith river, in 1855. 787 778 [648] [175]

The first owner was authorized to make two pipes, but no more ever existed among the Blackfeet. The only remaining one, above referred to, is now owned by a daughter of Mountain Chief; but as no woman is allowed to handle the bundle, her father is the actual custodian. [562]

As stated, the Catchers Society pipe bundle is an entirely different palladium and is much more elaborate than the Black Wrapped pipe. As only two specimens of this bundle ever existed among the Blackfeet, the writer was fortunate in obtaining one. The following information regarding this bundle was given by Split Ears (its last Blackfoot owner, from whom it was obtained) and from Mountain Chief. The pipe had its origin so long ago that the name of the first owner has been lost. [126] [115]

When the first owner of the Catchers Society pipe bundle dreamed about it, the Blackfeet camp 787 778 575 361

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787 778 575 [361] was situated about five miles above the site of the present town of McLeod, Alberta, and along Old Man river, at a place called Where They Paint The Raven Lodge. Near this camp was a buffalo fall, called *piskun*, at the foot of which the chief of the camp had a corral built. He was to direct the ceremony of "calling the buffalo" over the fall, being a buffalo-caller himself.[1] This man dreamed that a little boy came and invited him to his father's lodge. When he went there, he found that the lodge was in reality the *piskun*. As he entered, he was invited to sit in the rear of the lodge. Many buffalo-people were assembled, and he was informed that they formed the Catchers Society. Each member carried a warclub, at the end of each of which was tied a buffalo-hoof. The leader invited the chief to look up at the top of the lodge, where he saw two pipes hanging; these, he was told, belonged to the leaders of the society.

On the first night he was not permitted to witness the entire ceremony; but during the next night he again dreamed that the boy invited him to go to his father's lodge, and this time the pipes

[1] In this connection see Gilmore, Old Assiniboin Buffalo-drive in North Dakota, *Indian Notes*, vol. I, no. 4, Oct. 1924, and an account of the Cheyenne Stone Buffalo-horn presented to the Museum by Dr. George Bird Grinnell, ibid., vol. IV, p. 150, Apr. 1927.

were unwrapped and the transfer ceremony was performed. Four times he thus dreamed, and on each occasion was taught the ceremony and the songs. The buffalo-stones are placed in the pipe bundle because the first owner was a caller of buffalo; and for the same reason a buffalo-tail is fastened to the pipe. 787. 778 575

The pipe bundles, therefore, as well as the Catchers Society itself, had their origin in the dreams of the original pipe-owner.

The following song belongs to the bundle: 533 778 575

This is my pipe; it is powerful.

This is sung while dancing with the pipe, which is held first in the crook of the right elbow, and then transferred to the left. [539] [535]

The following buffalo song also belongs to the pipe:

This man chief, he says he wants to eat rump fat. [539]
This woman, she says she wants to eat rump fat.
This is the piskun; leader do not turn.

While singing this song the left arm is held in a half-circle, indicating the rim of the *piskun*, while the right hand is moved edgewise over the curve of the left arm, representing the buffalo going over the edge.

The leader is powerful; I want to eat. [539]

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778 575 115 (To this point the account of the origin of the Catchers Society bundle is by Mountain Chief. The following was communicated by Split Ears.)

796 778 575 425 [431] Before the opening ceremony begins, a blanket is spread at the head of the lodge, beneath the bundle, which is suspended from one of the tipi-poles at the back of the lodge. On this blanket are placed four gifts, usually pieces of trade cloth. A fire is made in front of the pipe-owner and his wife, and the latter brings from it an ember with tongs. The owner sits at the right of the bundle, facing the opening of the tipi; [824] his wife is seated at the left. The woman places incense (sweet balsam) on the ember, and both man and wife alternately hold their hands in the smoke, after which they pass one hand over the other, and rub their hands alternately on the arms, head, and body. During this process the incense song is sung, with the following words:

[539] *The man says the incense is powerful.*

[237] Before the smoking ember four buffalo-chips were placed in a row, but now cow-dung is used for this purpose.

After this the following song is sung four times:

[539] *The man says we are taking the buffalo; it is powerful.*

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This is followed by the following, sung four times: 796 778 575 425 [539]

The woman says we are taking the buffalo; it is powerful.

During the singing of the last song, the woman again holds her hands in the incense, blesses herself, and rises. She stands ready to take the bundle down, and after the last repetition of the song actually does so and holds it over the incense, four times making a feint as if to put the bundle down, and, after the fourth, actually placing it on the blanket and the gifts.

The following song is now sung four times:

The blanket, it is powerful. [539]

With each singing of this song the wrapper is partially removed, and after the fourth time the bundle is entirely uncovered. The wrapper here referred to is a red shawl, such as covers every important Blackfoot bundle.

The woman now again holds her hands in the incense four times, and while the following song is sung, she begins to unite the strings of the parflèche containing the buffalo-stones.

Woman says we are taking the buffalo; it is powerful. [539]

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796 778 575 425 [782] The woman takes the largest buffalo-stone from the parflèche bag and hands it to her husband, who prays to it. He then takes the pipe, still in its wrapper, holds it first against his left, then against his right shoulder, blesses himself with it, and puts it down again.

The woman now begins to untie the strings around the pipe wrapper, while the following song is sung:

[539] *Now you will see my pipe; it is powerful.*

After the covers are removed, the woman holds it four times over the incense and gives it to her husband, while singing:

[539] *I am giving you your pipe now; it is powerful.*

During this part of the transfer, the owner holds the incense stick and with it indicates the manner in which the pipe should be held by the new owners, changing it four times from one hand to the other. During this performance the following song is sung:

[539] *Old Man Above says he sees me; the earth is my medicine.*
Old Woman Above says she sees me; the earth is my medicine.

[782] The new owner of the pipe now prays to it,

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after which he hands the pipe to his wife, who likewise prays to it. [796] [778] [575] [425]

The following song is now sung:

Old Man Above says my paint is medicine. [782] [539]

The transferrer now paints the new owner with red paint and charcoal—a circle of red around the face, two black dots on each temple, and a black streak over the nose; a black circle is painted round each wrist and reaching three or four inches up the arm. The painting is done after three hesitations, and while singing the following song: [302]

I am giving you my paint; it is powerful. [539]

The new owner now removes his old clothing and the transferrer hands him a new suit, after again hesitating three times and while singing the following song: [291]

My clothes are medicine. [539]

The new owner gives his old clothes to the transferrer and dons the new ones.

The following song is next sung:

The man says my top feathers, they are powerful. [539]

During this singing the transferrer ties to the new owner's hair the hair attachment which is [301]

796 wrapped in the pipe bundle, that is, the only part
778 of the bundle which was formerly taken out on
575 the warpath. The transferrer also ties the brace-
425 lets, to which the small buffalo-stone is attached,
[301] around the wrist of the new owner and of his wife. (One of these bracelets is now missing.)

When this ceremony is ended the transferrer and his wife, and the new owner and his wife, rise and dance round the tipi, making four stops on the way. First comes the transferrer of the bundle, then the new owner, then the transferrer's wife, and lastly the wife of the new owner. During this dancing four wordless songs are sung.

The ceremony now completed, all present rise and dance, and the pipe is handed from one to another until it has been passed entirely around. During this dancing, in which the people do not move from their places, they sing the dance-songs, again without words. This closes the ceremony for that day.

The pipe is not bundled up after the ceremony. On the first night the new owner and his wife sleep on the right and the left side respectively of the exposed bundle, and do not rise until the former owner and his wife call the next morning
[824] before sunrise. As they enter the tipi they take a
[514] pinch of the sacred sweet balsam, chew it, and spit lightly on the new owner and his wife and their blankets, and help them to rise.

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their blankets, and help them to rise. Again they perform the entire ceremony, singing all the songs belonging to the bundle in proper rotation, thus teaching the new owner and his wife the ceremony. The previous owner then bundles up the pipe.

During the second day the new owner is taught also the four wordless songs which belong to the Catchers Society bundle. The wife of the new owner is taught how to carry the bundle, which is placed on her back after the usual four movements.

Rattles are used while singing the buffalo-stone songs, and the dancing is accompanied with drums, but these instruments are borrowed for the purpose.

The tripod is used when moving camp, and while taking down the tipi and setting it up again. Before bringing the pipe bundle into the tipi, incense always is made.

The pipe must never be placed on the ground, and when being smoked the bowl must rest on a special support wrapped with skin, which is a part of the bundle.

The Catchers Society pipe is sometimes taken out during the Sun Dance ceremony, filled and lighted, and smoke offered to the leading medicine-man, who in return prays for the pipe-owner

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778 When the call, "Here comes the medicine
784 pipe," is heard, the people quickly make a place for it to pass through, as misfortune would follow if anyone should pass in front of it. Nor is anyone permitted to pass between the bundle and
[761] the fireplace in the lodge. The ornaments on all
[531] medicine pipes are carefully examined, and retied whenever necessary, for if any piece belonging to the pipe should fall off when the bundle is unwrapped, or during the dancing, such mishap would portend the early death of some member of the family.

778 The entire contents of the Catchers Society
[127] bundle, as listed in the Museum catalogue (No. 12/512), are as follow:

A wooden tripod, on top of which is attached a parflèche bag containing the following: four skin paint-bags tied together, all containing red paint; a cloth and bladder and a skin paint-bag tied together, the bladder bag containing a piece of grease, the other two, red paint; two cloth bags and one skin bag tied together, each containing red paint; three skin bags tied together, each containing red paint; a skin bag containing red paint and two wrist ornaments consisting of thongs, each decorated with a large glass bead; a tie-string of cloth; six leather thongs; a fragment of a weasel-skin bag; four weasel-skin bags,

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a bundle consisting of a red stone tubular pipe-bowl inlaid with lead, wrapped in a cloth cover; a buffalo-skin bag containing eight fossils; and a buffalo-skin bag containing seven fossils. 778

Attached to this parflèche bag are the following: A notched, pronged stick for taking coals from fire; a cloth bag containing sweetgrass; a wooden tobacco mortar covered with skin and decorated with brass tacks; a deerskin bag decorated with beads; a wooden pipe-cleaner; a beaded pipe bag containing a dark-red stone pipe with incised decoration inlaid with lead and light-red stone, and a wooden pipestem with incised decoration; a bundle consisting of two red flannel bags, one inside the other, wrapped with a short cloth wrapper; inside the red cloth bag is a bundle composed of four cloth wrappers in which is a cloth wrapper containing two quilled hair-ornaments with a small fossil tied to each end and a lock of human hair on one end, also a piece of plug tobacco; a hair-ornament consisting of a feather with beaded and quilled decoration; a highly decorated calumet pipestem in a cloth wrapper.

The entire bundle is covered with a red shawl.